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ABSTRACT

How linguistic principles can be incorporated into reading instruction was shown by examining the interrelationships of certain linguistics ideas to learning to read. First, the acquisition of oral language was discussed as to the developmental stages: phonological, morphological-lexical, and syntactic. It was suggested that reading instruction should follow the same sequencing: that is, learning letters of the alphabet, blending letters or letter clusters into whole words, and learning syntactical and semantic elements. Second, the relationship of oral language to printed language was illustrated by a graph depicting the various stages, layers, or strands of spoken and printed language. However, it was noted that many elements of speech cannot be replicated in our printed language. Finally, a graph based on principles advocated by linguists for teaching reading delineated the scope and sequence of decoding reading skills considered to be mechanical in nature. It was noted that the order of skills shown by the second graph parallels the sequence of language layers in the first graph. Tables and references are included. (DH)

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USEFUL LINGUISTIC PRINCIPLES IN TEACHING READING

Linguistics is a discipline primarily concerned with describing man's physiological and psychological uses of language. Since reading is a form of language expression, many of the tenets advocated by linguistic scholars deserve close examination by professionals whose main concern is teaching children about the processes of reading. From an examination of the literature one must conclude that there is not a linguistic method of teaching children to read. Rather, there are various linguistic principles and phenomena that have been employed, most frequently by educators, as methods and procedures to be used in reading instruction. The purpose of this paper is to briefly demonstrate how some of these linguistic principles may be integrated with generally accepted practices in reading instruction.

The following linguistic ideas will be examined in an attempt to show some degree of inter-relationship to reading instruction: 1) The acquisition of oral language, 2) The relationship of oral language to written language, 3) A criterion based scope and sequence chart combining reading skills and linguistic principles.

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Reading as an outgrowth of acquired oral language

Considerable controversy rages between linguists and psychologists concerning the means by which children acquire language. Colleagues and students of Chomsky, frequently called nativists, tend to endow the young child with innate mechanisms for the self-discovery of the theories of his language. Behavioral psychologists tend to reject endowed early language mechanisms in children. Instead, they propose that reinforcement theory, applied by adult models in the child's social environment, explains how we acquire language.

While little agreement between these two groups may be reached concerning the means of language acquisition, both camps would concur regarding the end product of language acquisition. Scholars seem to agree that language is acquired in a predictable way with distinct, but overlapping developmental stages. Hodges, (1970) after reviewing pertinent literature, reported that language tends to unfold or develop along a continuum of three stages: phonological, morphological-lexical, and syntactic. He quoted data indicating that the age at which functional mastery of the phonemic stock of an individual's dialect ranges from about 4½ to 10 years. He also indicated that the average six year old is able to correctly articulate practically all the phonemes of English. John and Moskovitz (1970) refer to the early phonological development of children as the prelinguistic stage. They indicate this stage begins to develop in infants at about five months of age. The early vocalizations are at first vowel saturated; cooing then becomes interspersed with consonants. The prelinguistic or early phonological stage rapidly meld into the morphological stage. Hodges states, "The child's control of morphology proceeds, as do other language features, along a course of mastering the highly predictable and productive features toward the mastering of uncommon forms of limited distribution -- for example, derivational suffixes and irregular inflections" (1970, p. 217). At the age of about one, lexical development begins to take place and the first words of communicative effectiveness begin to appear. These one-word utterances or holophrases, tend to be nouns, verbs, or interjections. The form is

frequently that of a repeated syllable, e.g. "da-da" is "daddy", etc. At later stages of language development, children begin to combine words forming simple sentences. This early grammatical or syntactic stage of language growth is characterized by telegraphic speech. Children combine words into simple sentences but omit inflections and function words. Finally, the mastery of the syntax of one's language requires the remainder of childhood and adolescence.

During the time the child is learning to articulate the sounds of his dialect, blend these sound into meaningful words and arranges these words into cohesive sentences, he is also learning that words have meaning. He learns that language is used, for both communication and thought. So while the child is gaining mechanical mastery of his language, he is also attempting to gain cognitive mastery of his language. The average six-year-old pupil, then, seems to enter school with some functional control, depending upon the depth and breath of his preschool language experiences, of his dialect of the English language.

How does this brief summary of language acquisition provide some direction to teachers regarding reading instruction? First, the language the pupil brings with him to school will be different from the language of the teacher and the school. We might refer to the child's language as home talk or out-of-school talk. The pupil will be expected to master "school talk" as a result of his public school career. He won't master it, however, in the first grade. As teachers we must become accepting of the child's language productions. Frequent admonitions asking the child to substitute, "I do not have a pencil" for "I ain't gotsa pencil" will not change the child's "quality" of verbal output. Perhaps the best thing for a first grade teacher to do when a pupil responds, "I ain't gots no pencil", is to get him one! Early language development was a slow, natural process; we should expect similar speed with the development of school talk.

Secondly, we ought to consider utilizing the child's level of mastery of home talk in providing initial reading instruction. Charles fries has said, "learning to read in one's native language is learning to shift, to transfer, from auditory

signs for the language signals, which the child has already learned, to visual or graphic signs for the same signals." (1963, p. 188) Perhaps we might utilize Fries' observation and provide children the opportunity of reading their own talk. This implies that when children dictate stories for language experience charts, we must write all of what the pupil says, exactly as he says it in order to provide a language experience. If the pupil says, "My gramma, she cook greens," perhaps that ought to be the first verbal message the child attempt to decode. After the child has learned that the visual symbols the teacher has printed on the experience chart are his and only his talk, he may learn there are other ways of expressing home talk.

Finally, the predictable and developmental sequences through which children pass in acquiring oral language may point the way to more efficient methods of reading instruction. For example, if children master the phonological elements of their language first, then the symbolic referents to the phonological system should be introduced first. Following this reasoning, beginning reading instruction should be limited to learning the letters of the alphabet. If in learning to speak, the morpho-lexical stage is mastered next, then in reading instruction, we ought to consider teaching pupils how to blend symbolic referents into whole words. Formal reading and other language arts instruction should continue in a similar manner. Instruction in syntactical and semantic elements would follow if one were to attempt to simulate the developmental stages of oral language acquisition.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Relationship of oral language to printed language.

Figure one is an attempt to show graphically the various stages, layers or strands of spoken and printed language. The large arrows superimposed over the forms of each language expression are meant to imply that each of these forms is learned in a predictable and developmental way. For example, spoken language is primarily made up of each individual's sound repertory. The sound repertory

Figure 1

LANGUAGE

	SPOKEN	PRINTED
FORMS SPACE-DIRECTION SEQUENCE	Auditory - patterns produced in temporal sequence	Print and space, left to right in horizontal, parallel lines
LAYERS	Sound repertory	Symbol repertory
	phonemic	graphemic
	1. significant sounds	1. letters (upper-lower case)
	2. stress, pitch, juncture	2. punctuation marks, hyphens, italics, cap capitalization
	morphemic	3. prefixes, suffixes, root words, inflected endings
	lexical	4. words of a language
	grammatical	5. possible arrangement of words
MANIFESTED AS	SPEECH	READING
PURPOSE	COMMUNICATIONS THOUGHTS MEANINGS	

consists of several overlapping layers or strands. An individual begins to experiment with language production by articulating single sounds, then combines sounds to form morphemic units, which become later, lexical units. Parts of the lexical units, words, are combined in various manners to form the grammatical or syntactic layer of the language. All the layers are interrelated and manifested in the form of speech behavior or spoken language. It should be noted that both dialect, and paralinguistic expressions, non-verbal communications, have been omitted from Figure one. These two additional layers of spoken language are difficult to represent in printed language forms and hence were purposely omitted.

Printed language is represented at the right of the model. The space and direction sequence of spoken language is represented in printed language as print and space, arranged in English in a left to right order in horizontal parallel lines. We attempt to represent all the layers of the sound repertory that are listed in Figure one in our printed language. Note the connecting lines between phonemic layers, in the sound repertory and the graphemic layers in the symbol repertory. At each layer of the spoken language, there is an approximate corresponding layer represented in our printed language. The column headed printed language is really more wishful thinking than fact since there are many elements of our spoken language which cannot be replicated accurately in our printed language. Finally, the model shows that the purposes of spoken English, as manifested in speech, and of printed English as manifested in reading, are the same.

<u>A criterion based scope and sequence chart combining reading skills and linguistic principles.</u>

Before prescribing a specific sequence of skills to be employed in beginning reading instruction, it would be appropriate to look at the following principles advocated by linguists for the teaching of reading:

1) The first step involved in reading is that of decoding the printed message. Decoding is a process of reconstructing speech from the printed message. It is suggested by many linguists, that decoding is a mechanical process of interpreting sound to symbol correspondences. Meaning will only be available to a reader, according to many linguists, after decoding has taken place.
2) The words used in initial reading instruction should be chosen to show spelling--to sound relationships in the language that are consistent and hence predictable. The four major spelling patterns suggested by linguists are: (1) one-syllable words shaped (consonant), vowel, consonant, (C)VC e.g., cat, pit, plan, witch; (2) one-syllable words of the shape (consonant), vowel consonant, silent e. (C)VCE, e.g., made, slide, stripe; (3) one-syllable words shaped (consonant), vowel, vowel, consonant (C)VVC, (this pattern has more limited applicability than those previously mentioned), in this pattern the second vowel is silent, the first is "long," e.g., road, bait, feet; (4) one-syllable words of the shape (consonant) vowel (C)V, frequently called the open syllable, e.g., me, she, go.
3) Phonemes are represented by graphemes. The important distinction linguists wish to impress upon teachers is that letters do not make sounds; they stand for them.
4) In order to learn to read, pupils must be required to learn symbol to sound relationships. This is not to say that a pupil should learn sounds. Linguists contend pupils already know <u>sounds</u> when they enter school; their first task is to learn which letters represent which sounds.
5) Symbol to sound relationships must be taught as parts of words and not as isolated sound units matched with individual letters. Very few English sounds occur in isolation.
6) Sentence patterns should be regulated and introduced in the manner in which vocabulary words are presently controlled in basal readers.

7) Pupils must study more than isolated words in order to grasp complete meanings. Linguists maintain that meanings are carried by the arrangements of all of the words in an utterance. Therefore, in order to concentrate on meaning one must grasp the importance of the complete, whole sentence.

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

Figure two illustrates a suggested scope and sequence of decoding skills in reading that seem to be mechanical in nature. Mechanical skills are defined as those that are readily observable and easily measured. They appear to be basic to beginning reading instruction and might also be called decoding skills. In addition, this order of skills parallels the sequence of language layers shown in the printed language scheme illustrated in figure one.

The vertical arrow at the left of figure two depicts the suggested order in which the skills should be presented to beginning readers. The horizontal arrow, at the top of figure two, delineates the scope or magnitude of the decoding skills. The three categories of mechanical skills have been labelled phonic analysis, structural analysis and related language activities.

Phonic analysis skills would be those that teach pupils about the symbols or letters used in English spelling. Other phonic activities would prepare pupils to associate the symbols or letters with the sounds they represent. In addition, pupils would be taught to name the letters of the alphabet and match upper with lower case letters.

The term blending, also a phonic analysis skill, is used to describe a process and also to illustrate to pupils the alphabetic nature of English spelling. Beginning readers should internalize the spelling system used in English while learning to read. This process involves understanding that letters represent sounds in words. And, that these sounds represented by letters, occur in a left to right order. When teaching pupils about our spelling system, it is suggested that initial instruction be limited to words in which the sound and symbol

Figure 2

SCOPE AND SEQUENCE OF MECHANICAL READING SKILLS

Phonic Analysis	Structural Analysis	Language Activities
1. Letters - Naming (upper and lower case) - Matching - Auditory discrimination - Naming vowels		1. Manuscript formation of letters
2. Blending - Predictable spelling patterns (C)VC as in the word mat (C)VCE as in the word mate (C)VVC as in the word meat (C)V as in the word me	1. Initial and final consonants 2. Initial and final clusters 3. Medial vowels	2. Spell and write all predictable pattern words
	4. Inflection of (C)VC single syllable words (s, es, possessives)	3. Spelling and write endings add ff, ll, ss, ck at end of one-syllable words
	5. Inflection of other pattern words 6. Other endings: ing, ed, est, ion, er 7. Contractions	
3. Variant predictable spelling patterns r controlled vowels bar, bear, bare vowel clusters aw, oi, ow soft c, g, ph as /f/ silent letters		
	8. Patterned syllabication Compound words (mail man) spelling patterns (pic nic) i.e., (C)VC/(C)VC (stale mate) i.e., (C)VCE/(C)VCE before (C)le (ta ble) common syllables (tion, ed, ing)	4. Write and read sentences in basic patterns NV NVN NLvN NLvA
4. Unpredictable spelling patterns ild, old, ost		

correspondence is at an optimal level. Consequently, words that conform to the previously mentioned predictable spelling patterns, i.e., (C)VC, as in the word mat, (C)VCE as in the word mate, (C)VVC as in the word meat and (C)V as in the word me, should be used for initial reading instruction.

Words that are spelled so that their spelling provides some clues for pronunciation but the symbol to sound correspondences are not as consistent as the previously mentioned words may be called predictable spelled with some variations in sounds. For example, the sound associated with the letter "a" in the word ball is different from the sound of the same letter in the word cat. While the sounds differ in these two words, for decoding purposes the "l" controlled vowel sound in the word fall is consistent as long as decoding is limited to "l" controlled vowels. It is suggested, then, that these words be taught in families. For example, by substituting varying initial consonants the pupils can generate a list of words that rhyme, such as: ball, fall, and tall. The other entries on figure two, "r" controlled vowels, vowel clusters, and silent letters also provide similar clues for pronunciation and should be taught in rhyming lists.

The last group of words under the column phonic analysis conform to the previously mentioned spelling patterns but their pronunciations differ and hence they are called unpredictable patterns. For example, while the word mild could be classified a (C)VC word, the vowel sound associated with the letter "i" is "long." On the other hand, the word mint, also a (C)VC word, has a "short" vowel sound. The same situation exists when examining the pronunciation of the words love and lone, both (C)VCE words, but with different vowel sound associations for the letter "o." These words may need to be taught in word families or rhyming lists. Some of them may need to be taught individually.

Finally, words that do not conform to spelling patterns but are important in signaling meaning, such as structure or function words, need to be presented to pupils early in the sequence of reading instruction. These words have traditionally been defined as articles, conjunction, linking verbs, etc. Words such as the, was,

their, should be presented to pupils utilizing traditional developmental reading methods.

Structural analysis skills should be taught to provide pupils with methods of decoding whole words and their parts. It is suggested that pupils begin to blend predictably spelled words first by alternating initial consonants, e.g., change the word man to the word tan, then final consonants, changing the word man to the word map. Secondly, pupils should be able to spell and read consonant clusters in the initial position, i.e., change man to plan then in the final position, lad to lamp. When pupils have mastered these spelling alterations they should then be taught to substitute one middle vowel for another, i.e., change bat to bet to bit, etc.

The reaminder of the structural analysis skills as depicted in figure two illustrate skills that should be presented to show pupils how to read and spell various words.

Patterned syllabication activities should be provided so that pupils may decode words utilizing some of the phonic analysis skills previously taught. Pupils should receive instruction in order to decode unfamiliar printed words. The suggested sequence illustrates the specific syllabication skills that should be presented to pupils. Pupils should first attempt to decode words utilizing their knowledge of predictably spelled words. Secondly, familiar words, compound words should be divided into syllables. Then words containing (C)le, such as han/dle and ta/ble might be presented as syllabication exercises. Finally, common syllables should be used as a means of dividing words into syllables.

The column headed Language Activities delineates skills that are related to spelling, writing, and reading words, phrases, and sentences. And as such is an attempt to correlate the phonic and structural analysis skills previously presented.

In conclusion, this scope and sequence chart of mechanical reading skills was designed to implement some of the major tenets of linguistic scholars. The skills, if presented in this sequence would parallel the sequence of language layers as represented in figure one.

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